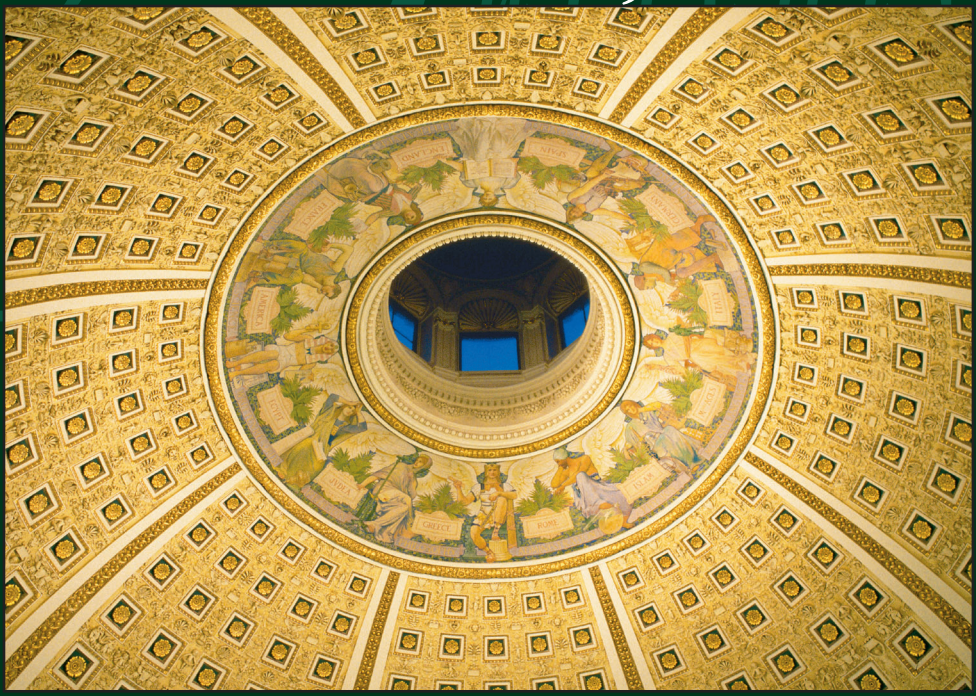
CURRENTS IN AMERICAN SCHOLARSHIP SERIES

# NEW DIRECTIONS IN *American Literary Scholarship* 1980–2002



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*"...as the sheer number of important studies...makes evident, there is no sign that an interest in producing literary scholarship and criticism is waning."*

Cover Image
*Ceiling of Library of Congress Main Reading Room*
Washington, DC 1991

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# Introduction

The Currents in American Scholarship series offers Americanists abroad updates on the status of theory and practice in disciplines relevant to the study of the society, culture and institutions of the United States of America. Prominent scholars from across the U.S. graciously accepted the invitation of the Study of the U.S. Branch to author annotated bibliographies. We hope the series proves to be valuable in introducing or refreshing courses on the United States, or expanding library collections.

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# The Authors

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# NEW DIRECTIONS IN *American Literary Scholarship* 1980–2002

Any limited survey of the state of literary scholarship in the United States is bound to exclude much worthy work that does not fit into the categories, paradigms, and areas of investigation selected by the authors of such an overview. An essay that attempts to review the most important movements and trends in American literary scholarship risks the criticism of having recognized some trends and ignored others. Recognizing such limitations, we hope that this essay may be a useful starting point for students and researchers of the literatures of the United States who are seeking an understanding of what have been the most significant directions of scholarship since the 1980s.

In recent years, literary critics from within the United States and abroad extended a number of important theoretical and aesthetic scholarly projects of the 1980s in exciting new directions. While some traditional themes and areas of investigation were revived, many new theories, approaches, and historical contexts were established, thereby generating both a dramatically expanded canon of texts and many new interpretations of works and authors of the established canon. Perhaps the most significant areas of research have been those that examine literature in relation to issues of race, class, and gender in American society and thought. In the last ten years, there has been a dramatic critical reevaluation of each of these general categories of investigation, with research on these topics becoming more theoretically sophisticated and historically informed.

Ideas related to such topics as hybridization, mixed race, transculturation, and the constructedness and fluidity of racial categories have enriched the discourses of many fields. Investigations into sex and gender were likewise extended and revised, with queer theory being both the most influen-

tial and contested addition to gender studies. As research focusing on gender, race, and the body became prominent, scholarship that attempted to break down the barriers and investigate the interplay between issues of race and gender also became increasingly popular. While some work continues to focus on issues of class, subaltern studies and postcolonial studies extended the investigation of class and nation into a post-nationalist direction. These shifts in categories have reflected a process of reevaluating the terms, divisions, and modes that have traditionally organized literary study and now represent a general movement toward a hybridized-style of investigation and away from a "separate spheres" model of scholarship.

## Literary, Cultural, and Intellectual Histories

Before discussing the move in literary studies away from a separate spheres approach and toward a hybridized approach, it may be worthwhile to trace the general directions that literary histories have taken in the last twenty years. The traditional American literary and intellectual histories of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s had a profound impact on the canon and on the perceived themes, myths, and metanarratives of American literature. From Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (1941) to Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land* (1950) to R.W. B. Lewis' *The American Adam* (1955), Richard Chase's *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (1957), Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), and Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964), this generation's literary histories created powerful myths of Americanness and asserted distinctive American themes and grand narratives that were discussed and debated for years. However, in the 1970s with the influence of deconstruction on American literary scholarship, and with the rise of feminist and minority discourses, the univocal thematics and metanarratives of these early literary histories came into question. Literary history remained something of a suspect field throughout much of the 1980s.

The theoretical developments of the 1980s generated a high degree of skepticism about the legitimacy of literary history, including challenges to the assumptions that scholars could trace causal connections between societal events and the contents and characteristics of a literary work. Gregory S. Jay and David Perkins are two critics emblematic of this skepticism; they question the possibility of producing literary history without reifying the historian's themes or marginalizing and excluding works by female and minority authors. David Perkins, in his *Is Literary History Possible?* (1992), admits to the important role literary history has traditionally played, yet he expresses doubts about its legitimacy. Gregory S. Jay, in *American Literature and the Culture Wars* (1996), discusses the problematics of the assertion of "American themes" in the formation of American canons, implicating them in the exclusion of minority and female texts: "Thematic criticism can be especially discriminatory, since themes are by definition repeated elements of a totality or metanarrative centered on a historically limited point of view, though thematic criticism regularly universalizes that perspective and so transforms an angle of insight into an oppressive ideological fabrication."

Despite this skepticism concerning literary history, students, pub-

lishers, and general readers still desired a historical framework for locating literary texts and movements and methods for understanding them. Therefore, the demand for literary history did not disappear because of the rise of a philosophical skepticism that labeled the genre "impossible." Thus, in 1982, the academic presses of Columbia and Cambridge Universities commissioned new histories of American literature. Emory Elliott agreed to be the General Editor of *The Columbia History of the United States* (1988) and Sacvan Bercovitch accepted the position of General Editor of *The Cambridge History of American Literature* (1994– ), although both made it evident in their "Introductions" that they too recognized the theoretical problems of doing literary history. The *Columbia* is a single volume collaborative work with over sixty essays whereas the *Cambridge* is a multi-volume project in which each volume contains monograph-length contributions by between two and five contributors. Elliott followed up the Columbia with *The Columbia History of the American Novel* (1991). These works are characteristic of much current literary history in their attempt to forge a new multicultural and postmodern form of literary history that, in Elliott's words, "acknowledges diversity, complexity, and contradiction by making them structural principles, and [that] forgoes closure as well as consensus." A recent work that offers a theoretical reconsideration of literary history in light of postmodernism and postcolonialism is Linda Hutcheon and Mario J. Valdés' edited collection, *Rethinking Literary History: A Dialogue on Theory* (2002), a work that includes essays by Hutcheon and Valdés, as well as by Stephen Greenblatt, Marshall Brown, and Walter D. Mignola.

Thus, in the latter half of the 1980s, new approaches to literary history began to be written—postmodern, poststructuralist approaches that attempted to integrate excluded or unexamined paradigms, tropes, structures, or genres, including literary histories that looked at oratory, rhetoric, philosophy, and marginalized or "low" genres. Now, some of the most interesting scholarship being produced is in the realm of literary, cultural, and intellectual history, and much of this new literary history can be grouped under the rubric of either feminist or multicultural literary history. Some representative works of revisionist feminist literary history are Alicia Suskin Ostriker's *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America* (1986), Gillian Brown's *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (1990), Susan K. Harris' *19th-Century American Women's Novels: Interpretive Strategies* (1990), and Nina Baym's *Feminism and American Literary History: Essays* (1992).

A pivotal work in the area of revisionist multicultural literary histories was Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), in which she asserts a new paradigm by which to reconsider the history of American literature, namely the presence of Africanness or blackness at the center of American literature and culture. Morrison asserts that American literature has depended on a "real or fabricated Africanist presence" to create, through contrast, a "sense of Americanness." She further expresses her concern about the manner in which white authors and culture silenced black voices and culture, relegating "conflicts to a 'blank darkness,' to conveniently bound and violently silenced black bodies," not only because she sees this metaphoric appropriation of the black body as a form of theft, but because she sees the consequences of this appropriation as a "master narrative that spoke *for* Africans" instead of allowing them to speak for themselves. Some other critics who explore this trope of a black presence hidden in plain sight include Eric Lott, Michael Rogin, Susan Gubar, and Jared Gardner, whose *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787–1845* (1998) explores the founding of a national identity on the fantasy of racial purity. Morrison's trope has influenced critics outside of African American studies, who see an Indian, Latino, Jewish, or female presence working as Morrison sees the Africanist presence working. For example, Sharon Patricia Holland, in her *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity* (2000), extends Morrison's project, asserting that blacks and other minorities, including Indians, women, and queers, are an "almost unspeakable" presence in American society. Philip J. Deloria, in *Playing Indian* (1998), Shari M. Huhndorf in *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (2001), and Joshua David Bellin in *The Demon of the Continent: Indians and the Shaping of American Literature* (2001) trace out the trope of a hidden Indian presence and of white appropriation of "Indian-ness" in American literature and culture. Three collections of essays that deal with these new paradigms of feminist and multicultural literary history are *Reconstructing American Literary History* (1986), edited by Sacvan Bercovitch, and *The American Literary History Reader* (1995) and *American Literature, American Culture* (1999), both edited by Gordon Hutner.

One of the major challenges to the traditional methods of conducting literary history has been the problem of the boundaries of literary periods. As we moved through the latter third of the twentieth century into the twenty-first century, scholars have been particularly troubled by

the task of defining such terms as modern and postmodern, often questioning whether these terms describe a literary, historical, or cultural era, a concept, an aesthetic movement, a philosophy, or a genre. Reevaluations of literary periods abound, including attempts to re-envision and re-define subjects and texts contained within terms such as American Renaissance, modernism, postmodernism, Naturalism, Realism, and the American Gothic. The scholarship surrounding modernism and postmodernism provides a typical example of the sort of debate taking place in this area of literary history.

The term "postmodernism" has become both a problem and an opportunity for literary historians. It is problematic in that it can be read as creating an unfortunate or not always useful binary with modernism. As Marjorie Perloff discusses in her *Poetry On & Off the Page: Essays for Emergent Occasions* (1998), the postmodern was postulated as a repudiation of Modernism and was seen as rejecting the intellectual and aesthetic "traps"—metanarrative, nostalgia, and closure—that modernism was often accused of falling into. Perloff attributes this definition of postmodernism in opposition to modernism, whether aesthetically or philosophically, in part to Jean-Francois Lyotard and other French poststructuralists (the philosophical binary) and in part to Ihab Hassan (the aesthetic binary) as seen in his 1971 article, "POSTmodernISM: A Paracritical Bibliography" (reprinted in his *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture,* 1987). Most literary histories of modernism and postmodernism have questioned this binary, finding "postmodern" elements and tropes already present in "high modernist" works. Additionally, critics of modernism are increasingly finding heterogeneity at the heart of a period, concept, aesthetic, or genre that had heretofore been read as fairly unified. Even a figure like T.S. Eliot, who to some had epitomized the "sins" of modernism, is now being read as having "postmodern" aspects to his works, such as his incorporation of "low" or "vernacular" culture and language into his poetry. Michael Beehler, in his *T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, and the Discourses of Difference* (1987), began the process of rethinking the nature of Eliot's modernist aesthetic, and Michael North, with his *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language and Twentieth-Century Literature* (1994), reconceptualizes modernists like Eliot by demonstrating their use of dialect and their connection to black modernists. James Longenbach, in *Modern Poetry After Modernism* (1997), offers a new view of postmodern American poetry that sees it as an extension of modernism rather than a repudia-

tion of it. Other works that deal with these issues of modernism, postmodernism, and poetics include Marjorie Perloff's *Poetic License: Essays on Modernist and Postmodernist Lyric* (1990) and *21st-Century Modernism: The "New" Poetics* (2002), Steven Gould Axelrod's *Sylvia Plath: The Wound and the Cure of Words* (1990), Wendy Stallard Flory's *The American Ezra Pound* (1989), Leonard Diepeveen's *Changing Voices: The Modern Quoting Poem* (1993), Maria Damon's *The Dark End of the Street: Margins in American Vanguard Poetry* (1993), Bob Perelman's *The Marginalization of Poetry: Language Writing and Literary History* (1996), Thomas Travisano's *Midcentury Quartet: Bishop, Lowell, Jarrell, Berryman, and the Making of a Postmodern Aesthetic* (1999), and Michael North's *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (1999).

Some now ask if the term postmodern will not clearly create a binary with even modernism, then what is its usefulness? In *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence, 1982–1985* (1992), Jean Francois Lyotard argues that the postmodern is already in the modern; however, while arguing that postmodernism and modernism are part of the same general philosophical movement, he still differentiates between the two by seeing the modern artist as reacting with regret to the impossibility for metanarratives and representations of the "real," while the postmodernist reacts with joyful free play and experimentation. Works such as Linda Hutcheon's *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1980), *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988), *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989), Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), and Frederic Jameson's *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) establish the central issues concerning postmodernism and provide a terminology to discuss them. *Postmodern Genres* (1988), edited by Marjorie Perloff, includes essays exploring postmodernism across genre lines, with discussions of postmodern music, performance art, history, photography, and installation art.

A great deal of valuable literary history has revolved around other periods, eras, and movements. Some useful works exploring the early American era include Sacvan Bercovitch's *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America* (1993), Stephen Carl Arch's *Authorizing the Past: The Rhetoric of History in Seventeenth-Century New England* (1994), Kathleen M. Brown's *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (1996), Michael J. Colacurcio's *Doctrine and Difference: Essays in the Literature of New England* (1997), Andrew Delbanco's *The Puritan Ordeal*

(1989), Emory Elliott's *The Cambridge Introduction to Early American Literature* (2002), and Philip H. Round's *By Nature and by Custom Cursed: Transatlantic Civil Discourse and New England Cultural Production, 1630–1660* (1999). Some works that investigate the revolutionary period include Leon Chai's *Jonathan Edwards and the Limits of Enlightenment Philosophy* (1998), Jim Egan's *Authorizing Experience: Refigurations of the Body Politic in Seventeenth-Century New England Writing* (1999), J.C.D. Clark's *The Language of Liberty, 1660–1832: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo American World* (1994), Emory Elliott's *Revolutionary Writers: Literature and Authority in the New Republic, 1725–1810* (1982), Jay Fliegelman's *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (1993), Robert A. Ferguson's *The American Enlightenment, 1750–1820* (1997), Edward G. Gray's *New World Babel: Language and Nations in Early America* (1999), Susan Juster's *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England* (1994), Jane Kamensky's *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (1997), Michael P. Kramer's *Imagining Language in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War* (1992), and Gary B. Nash's *Race and Revolution* (1990).

Scholarship on nineteenth-century American writing includes many monographs and collections devoted to the traditional major figures with considerable attention devoted to authors such as Herman Melville and Mark Twain, such as Hershel Parker's *Herman Melville: A Biography, vols. I and II* (1996 and 2002) and Viola Sachs' *L'imaginaire Melville: A French Point of View* (1992), but to those have been added many works also on Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and other women and writers of color such as Kate Chopin and Charles Chesnutt. Some works investigating the "American Renaissance" include Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen's collection *Ideology and Classic American Literature* (1986), Richard H. Brodhead's *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (1993), Myra Jehlen's *American Incarnation: The Individual, the Nation, and the Continent* (1986), Cindy Weinstein's *The Literature of Labor and the Labors of Literature: Allegory in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* (1995), John Carlos Rowe's *At Emerson's Tomb: The Politics of Classic American Literature* (1997), Timothy Powell's *Ruthless Democracy: A Multicultural Interpretation of the American Renaissance* (2000), Walter Benn Michaels and Donald E. Pease's edited collection *The American Renaissance Reconsidered* (1985), and Alan L. Ackerman Jr.'s *The Portable*

*Theater: American Literature and the Nineteenth Century Stage* (1999).

Studies exploring the turn of the century include Martha Banta's *Imagining American Women: Idea and Ideals in Cultural History* (1987), *Taylored Lives: Narrative Production in the Age of Taylor, Veblen, and Ford* (1993), and *Barbaric Intercourse: Caricature and the Culture of Conduct. 1841–1936* (2002), Michael Davitt Bell's *The Problem of American Realism: Studies in the Cultural History of a Literary Idea* (1993), Anne DuCille's *The Coupling Convention: Sex, Text, and Tradition in Black Women's Fiction* (1993), Frances Smith Foster's *Written by Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746–1892* (1993), Farah Jasmine Griffin's *"Who Set You Flowin": The African American Migration Narrative* (1995), Giles Gunn's *Thinking Across the American Grain: Ideology, Intellect, and the New Pragmatism* (1991), Sämi Ludwig's *Pragmatist Realism: The Cognitive Paradigm in American Realist Texts* (2002), Walter Benn Michaels' *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature at the Turn of the Century* (1987), Susan L. Mizruchi's *The Power of Historical Knowledge: Narrating the Past in Hawthorne, James, and Dreiser* (1988), Carla Peterson's *"Doers of the Word": African American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830–1880)* (1995), Valerie Smith's *Self Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative* (1987), and Mary Helen Washington's *Invented Lives: Narratives of Black Women, 1860–1960* (1987).

Some recent works of note focused upon texts and authors of the twentieth century including Michael Awkward's *Negotiating Difference: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Positionality* (1995), Robert J. Corber's *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity* (1997), Thadious M. Davis' *Nella Larsen, Novelist of the Harlem Renaissance: A Woman's Life Unveiled* (1994), Michael Denning's *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (1996), Ann Douglas's *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (1995), Ann DuCille's *Skin Trade* (1996), Hilene Flanzbaum's edited collection *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (1999), Philip Brian Harper's *Are We Not Men?: Masculine Anxiety and the Problem of African-American Identity* (1996) and *Private Affairs: Critical Ventures in the Culture of Social Relations* (1999), Trudier Harris' *The Power of the Porch: The Storyteller's Craft in Zora Neale Hurston, Gloria Naylor, and Randall Kenan* (1996), Carol E. Henderson's *Scarring the Black Body: Race and Representation in African American Literature* (2002), Mae Henderson's edited collection *Borders, Boundaries, and Frames: Essays in*

*Cultural Criticism and Culture Studies* (1995), Paul Lauter's *Canons and Contexts* (1991), George Lipsitz's *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (1990) and *American Studies in a Moment of Danger* (2001), Walter Benn Michaels' *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (1995), Steven Mailloux's *Reception Histories: Rhetoric, Pragmatism, and American Cultural Politics* (1998), Venetria K. Patton's *Women in Chains: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's Fiction* (2000), John Whalen-Bridge's *Political Fiction and the American Self* (1998), and David Wyatt's *Five Fires: Race, Catastrophe, and the Shaping of California* (1997).

A major trend in literary history is the focus on reintegrating ignored or marginalized genres, including oratory, rhetoric, philosophy, and legal documents. For example, Harold Bush, in *American Declarations: Rebellion and Repentance in American Cultural History* (1999), traces within the history of American oratory what he sees as an "ongoing process of cultural dialogue" central to American literature and culture, a dialogue that he argues includes both conservative and liberal voices within a broad American, Christian mythos of repentance. Bush's argument is that this myth of repentance, coming out of Biblical and Christian sources and with its American locus in the Declaration of Independence, is broad enough to inspire both conservatives and liberals. Other works that explore the intersections of literature and the law are Wai Chee Dimock's *Residues of Justice: Literature, Law, Philosophy* (1996), Robert A. Ferguson's *Law and Letters in American Culture* (1984), Brook Thomas' *American Literary Realism and the Failed Promise of Contract* (1997), and Priscilla Wald's *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (1995).

**Thematic Criticism**

Along with the continuation of literary histories focused on periods, there has been a revival of a type of literary history long called into question, which focused on themes. While it would be an overstatement to claim a return of thematic or intellectual history, at least in the tradition of Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (1936), investigations into ideas, themes, and ideologies, in newly complicated and embodied forms, have begun something of a healthy revival. Certainly the intellectual and thematic scholarship of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is radically different from that of the past. Instead of stressing continuity and unity, contemporary intellectual and thematic criticism focuses on historical and

philosophical discontinuities, and attempts to "re-embody" and historicize the philosophical. The results have been persuasive, influential, and controversial, and have produced works on a wide variety of topics, including religion and spirituality, the environment, childhood, and a variety of new forms of literary and cultural histories.

An older form of literary criticism that has had something of a revival is thematically-focused criticism, but now such criticism is being applied to previously unexplored topics and themes, such as the body, the book, "wonder," and "childhood." Werner Sollors's collection *The Return of Thematic Criticism* (1993) reveals both this revival of interest in thematic criticism and the lingering, theoretical distrust regarding it, a distrust expressed as well by Gregory S. Jay in his *American Literature and the Culture Wars* (1997). Nevertheless, thematic scholarship is back, now informed by feminist, postcolonial, and poststructuralist critical positions. In the revival of thematic criticism, there is the hope that a tentatively asserted thematic approach may in fact work in favor of new, more pluralistic views of American literature. For example, the study of children's literature continues but now it has become an interdisciplinary sub-field of "childhood studies," "girl studies," or "studies of the domestic space and family," as represented by Rutgers University's Center for Children and Childhood Studies. A few characteristic works in this field include Paula S. Fass and Mary Ann Mason's edited collection *Childhood In America* (2000), James R. Kincaid's *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (1998), Michael Moon's *A Small Boy and Others: Imitation and Initiation in American Culture from Henry James to Andy Warhol* (1998), Ruth O. Saxton's edited collection *The Girl: Constructions of the Girl in Contemporary Fiction by Women* (1998), and Gail Schmunk Murray's *American Children's Literature and the Construction of Childhood* (1998). Some works focused on domesticity and motherhood include Gillian Brown's *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (1990), Stephanie A. Smith's *Conceived by Liberty: Maternal Figures and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (1994), and Lora Romero's *Home Fronts: Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States* (1997).

Another emergent area of thematic criticism is environmental criticism, which investigates the impact of the environment on literary works and the impact of imaginative or rhetorical works on the environment. Environmental criticism includes everything from literary histories focused on depictions of the city or on an environmental region,

to the Ecocriticism of a work such as Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995). Two other works of Ecocriticism are Buell's *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (2001) and *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Three works that exemplify the many current studies of architecture, the city, space, and the imagination are Richard Lehan's *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History* (1998), Cecelia Tichi's *Embodiment of a Nation: Human Form in American Places* (2001), and Catherine Jurca's *White Diaspora: The Suburb and the Twentieth-Century Novel* (2001).

**"No More Separate Spheres!"**

While a rich and varied body of literary history of a relatively traditional type continued to be produced, the main direction of the newest criticism has taken the approach often referred to as "No More Separate Spheres." One of the most important works in the move away from a "separate spheres" approach and toward a more hybridized approach to literary scholarship was the special 1998 edition of *American Literature,* edited by Cathy N. Davidson, titled "No More Separate Spheres!" which is now a 2002 book by the same name. In this highly influential issue, Davidson calls for a reevaluation of the past binaries and divisions which tended to place investigations of women's writing into a separate sphere, and, through its "binaric gender division," to organize the critical discussion in such a way as to avoid fruitful complications of "the separate spheres paradigm, especially with regard to issues of race, sexuality, class, region, religion, occupation, and other variables." Davidson thus calls for a new sort of scholarship that brings together the productive work on gender produced under the separate spheres binary in the past with reconsiderations of gender and a myriad of other issues and categories. Davidson's special issue includes essays by such important scholars as Judith Fetterley, Marjorie Pryse, José F. Aranda Jr., Lauren Berlant, and Amy Kaplan; in the book version, Davidson adds such influential essays as Elizabeth Renker's controversial "Herman Melville, Wife Beating, and the Written Page" {*American Literature 66* (March 1994)} and Maurice Wallace's "Constructing the Black Masculine: Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, the Sublimits of African American Autobiography" (originally published in *Subjects and Citizens: Nation, Race, and Gender from Oroonoko to Anita Hill,* edited by Michael Moon and Cathy N. Davidson in 1995).

## Race and Ethnicity

Davidson's call for the hybridization of American literary scholarship in terms of gender parallels the earlier impact of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), which regenerated racial investigations in a manner parallel to Davidson's suggestions for gender investigations. Gilroy's work builds upon the work of W.E.B. Du Bois and C.L.R. James, especially borrowing Du Bois' concept of double consciousness and applying it to a theoretical rejection of fixed ideas of race and ethnicity. Gilroy rejects concepts of "ethnic absolutism" and "the integrity and purity of cultures" that he sees as coming out of a flawed nationalistic focus that ignores the transcultural, and he calls for a broader investigation into race and culture that builds on theories of creolization, mestizaje, double consciousness, and hybridity. Gilroy's attempt to investigate the "processes of cultural mutation and restless (dis)continuity that exceed racial discourse and avoid capture by its agents" seems to be informed also by Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992). Also important for Gilroy are the works of various Latin American and Latino critics beginning in the 1940s with Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz and continuing with Uruguayan literary critic Angel Rama in the 1970s and Chicana poet and critic Gloria Anzaldúa in the 1980s. Although Pratt does not focus primarily on travel writing by writers of the United States, she offers much of use to the critic of U.S. literatures by providing important close readings of early Latin American and Euro-American texts and drawing useful connections between Euro-American travel narratives and slave narratives. With her focus on "contact zones," those social spaces "where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other," Pratt examines what she perceives to be asymmetrical power relations out of which European, Euro-American, and indigenous writers helped to construct the "domestic subject" through their travel narratives. Pratt reveals the complex hybridity of the structures and messages of imperial and anti-imperial travel writing. Her scholarship crosses disciplinary lines and reclaims lost or forgotten texts both by and about early colonial subjects. Another important work that deals with early "contact zones" is Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (1991), that explores the ways that Europeans during the "Age of Discovery" experienced and depicted indigenous Americans using an aesthetics of wonder and the marvelous that, in turn, enabled the European manipulation, colonization, exploitation,

and appropriation of indigenous Americans and their cultures.

Another critic whose work predates Gilroy's and traces the influences of African culture and Africanisms on black and white American authors alike, is the historian Sterling Stuckey. Beginning with his *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (1987), and continuing in his later *Going Through the Storm: The Influence of African American Art in History (1*994), Stuckey traces the continuing influence of African cultural forms, including dance, music, poetry, and folklore, on such diverse American writers and artists as Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, and Herman Melville. In the first chapter of *Slave Culture,* Stuckey demonstrates the continuing influence of the African spiritual dance, the ring-shout, upon American artistic and cultural production well into the twentieth century. Stuckey argues that an aesthetics of hiddenness, originating in the historical necessities of African slave culture, continues in the works of various African American and Euro-American artists. Stuckey and Eric Sundquist, who has done similar work, propose that African cultural tropes and practices persist and have not been completely transformed or hybridized. Sundquist, in his *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (1993), attempts to move beyond a theory of hybridity to perform the more difficult practical work of tracing the influence of African and African American culture on multicultural American literary production. Sundquist rejects a separate spheres approach to American literature, reading both white and black U.S. literatures as fundamentally part of one tradition. In addition, Shelley Fisher Fishkin in *Was Huck Black?: Mark Twain and African American Voices* (1993), argues that the model for Huck's distinctive vernacular speech was the black speech of a young African American named Jimmy about whom Twain had written a sketch. Thus, Sundquist, Stuckey, and Fishkin all point to the enormous importance of Africanisms—African oral, cultural, musical, intellectual, and rhetorical forms—to the formation of American culture and thus American literature. Houston A. Baker's *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (1984), *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance (1*987), and *Workings of the Spirit: A Poetics of Afro-American Women's Writing* (1991), Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (1988), and Judith Jackson Fossett and Jeffrey A. Tucker's edited collection *Race Consciousness: African-American Studies for the New Century* (1997) likewise explore these issues.

A number of critics have been influenced by Gilroy, Pratt, and the others working within this general realm of hybridity studies, including Joseph Roach, who brings an emphasis on performance theory to the issues of hybridity and the transcultural. In his *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), Roach explores the interrelated topics of memory, forgetting, history, performance, and loss throughout what he calls the circum-Atlantic, that postnational area bounded by Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Roach is interested in a number of interconnected issues: cultural migration and hybridization, performativity, and memory. He argues that memory is fluid, performative, imaginative, and embodied, and that "culture reproduces and re-creates itself by a process that can be best described by the word *surrogation*." He further argues that performance enables intra-cultural and inter-cultural communication and that central to the creation of modern culture are "the diasporic and genocidal histories" of Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

Another book that approaches race and hybridity from a performative if not a postnational perspective is Eric Lott's *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (1993). Lott focuses on the minstrel show in which he finds that the white performance of "blackness" revealed a psychologically conflicted mixture of desire and fear, transgression and containment, racism and sympathetic desire for connection. Minstrelsy, according to Lott, "arose from a white obsession with black (male) bodies," and revealed a complex array of white social and psychological attitudes toward blackness, including "panic, anxiety, terror, and pleasure." Lott's highly interdisciplinary work argues that we should read blackface as more than merely a racist performance; he reads it as also "a manifestation of the particular desire to try on the accents of 'blackness' and demonstrate the permeability of the color line," and as thus a potential force for interracial and intercultural hybridity. Minstrelsy was an act that worked, despite white power, "to facilitate safely an exchange of energies between two otherwise rigidly bounded and policed cultures." This strategic use of blackface as an escape from the bourgeois limitations of white, middle-class society is a move that continues on into the twentieth century, as can be seen with white rappers such as Eminem.

Michael Rogin and George Lipsitz are two of several scholars investigating these issues of cultural hybridity in the twentieth century. In *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (1996), Rogin extends Lott's observations concerning blackface into a

study of American cinema and the Jewish American performers and producers who extended and adapted this genre for a new medium and context. Rogin traces the origins of blackface in the U.S., and then explores the use of a variety of forms of minstrelsy by acculturating Jewish performers such as Al Jolson "in the service of Americanizing immigrants." Important in Rogin's work are the twin figures of "Mammy" and "Uncle Sam." These figures expose a psychic space of desire and repulsion where assimilating Jews, as well as other American immigrants, could imagine the possibility of simultaneously assimilating into American culture and retaining their family, ethnic, and religious uniqueness. In his *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (1990), and *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism, and the Poetics of Place (*1994), George Lipsitz investigates many of these issues by examining cultural forms from the Mardi Gras Indians of New Orleans to television, rock music, reggae, rap, novels, and film. Susan Gubar's *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture* (1997) examines the "cross-racial impersonations and imitators" in American literature, film, the visual arts, and journalism. Gubar's study of white appropriation and mimicry of African cultural forms ranges from the derogatory blackface to the more respectful use of African forms in modernist primitivism. Also useful in these new areas are these collections of essays: *Holding Their Own: Perspectives on the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the United States* (2000), edited by Dorothea Fischer-Hornung and Heike Raphael-Hernandez; *Ceremonies and Spectacles: Performing American Culture* (2000), edited by Teresa Alves, Teresa Cid, and Heinz Ickstadt; and *Crossing Borders: Inner- and Intercultural Exchanges in a Multicultural Society* (1997), edited by Heinz Ickstadt.

This new approach to culture and race focusing on hybridity and transculturation is not limited to works dealing with African and European mixtures. Also appearing has been much fruitful work that focuses on Latino/U.S., Asian/U.S., Native American/U.S., and other ethnic or racial hybridities, as well as works that revise and reinterpret the issue of European/American cultural influences in a radically new way that rejects the unidirectional Europe-to-the-Americas theory of influence found in earlier scholarship. This new transatlantic approach favors a multidirectional concept of influence that sees cultural forms and concepts as flowing both ways across the Atlantic, in a rich and complex cross-pollination. For example, Leon Chai's *The Romantic Foundations of the American Renaissance* (1987) traces a myriad of European cultural,

philosophical, and literary influences on nineteenth-century American writers. While Chai's book is fairly traditional in reading the European influence as predominantly unidirectional, it is nonetheless useful in its thoroughness and its avoidance of a teleological reading of European influence. Robert Weisbuch's *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson* (1986) offers a reading of transatlantic influence that complicates the issue of European influence through an application of Harold Bloom's psychological theory of influence. Weisbuch's primary assertion is that American authors faced a type of "anxiety of influence," and dealt with British condescension and rejection by attempting to turn the perceived weaknesses of the American literary/cultural materials into strengths, and by misreading and misinterpreting major British texts (in other words, performing a Bloomian 'agon'). Finally, Paul Giles, in *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Literature, 1730–1860* (2001) and in *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (2002), presents productive transatlantic readings of cultural influences. Giles asserts that, paradoxically, both British and American national cultures and literary identities were dependent on interactions with their counterpart for their formation.

An important theoretical work for studies of Asian American literary and cultural hybridity is Lisa Lowe's *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (1997). Lowe asserts that the Asian American immigrant is seen as a perpetual "foreigner-within," and thus "emerges in a site that defers and displaces the temporality of assimilation." As a result of this perpetual difference, Asian American culture offers an aesthetic and philosophical alternative site that contradicts myths of a universal national identity. Lowe therefore concludes that "[u]nderstanding Asian immigration to the United States is fundamental to understanding the racialized" political and economic foundations of the United States as a culture and a nation. Another work that brings a transnational and gendered approach to the topic of Asian American literature is Rachel C. Lee's *The Americas of Asian American Literature: Gendered Fictions of Nation and Transnation* (1999). Lee argues that discussions of Asian American literature have been dominated by a focus on ethnic themes, resulting in the marginalization of what she sees as the more central themes of family, gender roles, sexuality, and kinship. Lee therefore argues for a new approach to Asian American literatures focusing on gender and sexuality, and rethinking "American" in a post-nationalist

manner that is trans-Pacific and trans-hemispheric. Some further examples of the wealth of interesting scholarship in this area include King-Kok Cheung's *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature* (1997), Shirley Geok-lin Lim's *Nationalism and Literature: English-language Writing from the Philippines and Singapore* (1993) and her *Writing S.E/Asia in English: Against the Grain: Focus on Asian English-language Literature* (1994), Gary Y. Okihiro's *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (1994), Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance (*1993), Traise Yamamoto's *Masking Selves, Making Subjects: Japanese American Women, Identity, and the Body* (1999), Patricia P. Chu's *Assimilating Asians: Gendered Strategies of Authorship in Asian America* (2000), Anne Anlin Chang's *The Melancholy of Race (*2001), the collection edited by David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom, *Q & A: Queer in Asian American* (1998), and the collection edited by Rocio G. Davis and Sämi Ludwig, *Asian American Literature in the International Context: Readings on Fiction, Poetry and Performance* (2002).

There is much important scholarship exploring the issues of hybridization, transculturation, borderlands, mestizaje, and code switching in Chicano literature and culture. One of the most influential and original texts within this area is Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), now considered a classic in Latino border studies, cultural studies, and feminist and lesbian theory. Anzaldúa's exploration of the borderlands is both literal and symbolic, dealing with the literal U.S./Mexican border, but also exploring the "psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands, and spiritual borderlands" that occur when people of different races and classes come into contact and "the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy." Also valuable for the study of Chicana writers is Alvina E. Quintana's *Home Girls: Chicana Literary Voices* (1996). Broad in scope, José David Saldívar's *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies (1*997) explores issues of borderlands and transnationality, shifting the "critical paradigms in American Studies away from linear narratives of immigration, assimilation, and nationhood" and toward a focus on migration, border-crossings, and life in a post-nationalist or transnationalist space. Also valuable is his *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History* (1991), and Ramon Saldivar's *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference* (1990). Two works that apply these borderland concepts to poetry are Rafael Pérez-Torres's *Movements in Chicano Poet-*

*ry: Against Myths, Against Margins* (1995) and Alfred Arteaga's *Chicano Poetics: Heterotexts and Hybridities* (1997).

A few important works in the study of Native American literatures, histories, and cultures include Paula Gunn Allen's *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions (*1986), Eric Gary Anderson's *American Indian Literature and the Southwest: Contexts and Dispositions* (1999), Helen Carr's *Inventing the American Primitive: Politics, Gender, and the Representation of Native American Literary Traditions, 1789–1936* (1996), Arnold Krupat's *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture* (1996) and his *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon (*1989), Cheryl Walker's *Indian Nation: Native American Literature and Nineteenth-Century Nationalisms* (1997), Gerald Vizenor's *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance* (1994) and his *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (1998), Jace Weaver's *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (1997), Hilary E. Wyss' *Writing Indians: Literacy, Christianity, and Native Community in Early America* (2000), and three collections: *Critical Essays on Native American Literature* (1985) edited by Andrew Wiget; *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (1997) edited by Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang; and *Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays* (1996) edited by Helen Jaskoski.

### The Construction of Race/Interracial Literature/Whiteness Studies

Along with scholarship investigating cultural and racial hybridity, there has been a great deal of fruitful scholarship investigating interracial themes, mixed race, and the constructedness and fluidity of racial categories, including the construction of "whiteness" as a racial identity in the U.S. An important figure in mixed race scholarship is Werner Sollors, who has investigated depictions of racial and interracial issues in such works as *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (1986), *The Invention of Ethnicity* (1989), *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (1997), and his edited *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law* (2000). *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both* is typical of his work in its exploration of the history of literary, visual, sociological, and legal discourses focusing on such interracial themes as the tragic mulatto, the conflation of incest and miscegenation, passing, and the biblical, literary trope of the "curse of Ham."

In addition to research exploring interracial themes, there has been a great deal of work written dealing with the constructedness and fluidity of racial categories. Much of this scholarship focuses on the study of "whiteness." Theodore W. Allen's two-volume *The Invention of the White Race* (1994; 1997) provides a good starting point for the study of the invention of the white race out of a variety of European ethnic identities. Allen traces the birth of racism and the creation of "white" as an identity born out of economic and class needs. He demonstrates the relativity and mutability of racial identity construction through the example of the Irish, showing how this racially oppressed and excluded group was transformed into a part of the privileged "white" race. Allen demonstrates how sometimes antagonistic Europeans who identified as part of a variety of organizations, groups, and ethnicities—trade, religious, military, and nationalist groups—came to identify themselves as "white." Another work that traces the transformation of the Irish into white is Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* (1995), which explores Irish assimilation and Irish and African American relations. Karen Brodkin follows in Ignatiev's and Allen's footsteps with her *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (1998). Matthew Frye Jacobson's *Whiteness Of A Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (1998) studies the shifting, fluid transformations of racial categories, not to erase the realities of white privilege, but to contextualize these realities upon a revised history of European "immigration and assimilation in the United States as a *racial odyssey*." Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (1994) explores "how concepts of race are created and changed, how they become the focus of political conflict, and how they have come to permeate U.S. society."

Three collections of essays and a special issue of the *Minnesota Review* provide useful introductions to the controversial study of "whiteness." Mike Hill's *Whiteness: A Critical Reader (*1997) explores white politics, white culture, white bodies, and the connection between whiteness and the Enlightenment concept of a universal liberal subject. Taking up such cultural issues as Rush Limbaugh, white trash culture, film noir, and musical genres from Janis Joplin's blues to country to doo-wop, it includes Warren Hedges' "If Uncle Tom is White, Should We Call Him 'Auntie'? Race and Sexuality in Postbellum U.S. Fiction," which engages Leslie Fiedler's influential essay of 1948, "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" and examines the role that "nascent

homophobia played in regulating white identity" during the nineteenth century. Hedges argues that "homophobic imagery…had as much to do with racial norms as it did with norms of sex and gender." He teases out this idea using the nineteenth-century figure of the white "dissolute," and he asserts that the elision of blackface and cross-dressing in *Pud-d'nhead Wilson,* and in other texts of this period, demonstrates that a destabilization of racial boundaries also involves a destabilization of gender boundaries. Richard Delgado and Jean Stafancic's *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror* (1997) explores the breadth of whiteness studies, including such issues as: how whites see themselves; how whites see others; the invention of whiteness; the transformations in who is categorized as "white" with each new wave of immigration; the role of history, the law, and culture in defining and redefining whiteness; and the color line and "passing." Ruth Frankenberg's edited collection, *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (1997) and the special 1997 edition of the *Minnesota Review,* "The White Issue" (volume 47), also explore the dominant issues in this new area of study.

A number of important single-author studies of "whiteness" in American culture and literature have appeared in the last few years. David Savran's *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* (1998) explores the increasing "masochistic" tendency among white, male, middle-class Americans to imagine themselves as victimized and feminized. Savran asserts that the white male fears invasion of his body by the Other, whether that Other is homosexual or black or both. Richard Dyer's *White* (1997) interrogates the representation of whiteness by whites in Western visual culture, situating these representations within the contexts of Christianity, race, and colonialism. Valerie Babb, in *Whiteness Visible: The Meaning of Whiteness in American Literature and Culture* (1998), explores the production and dissemination of whiteness through American literature and culture. Babb argues that "from the 1700s on, whiteness is key to the maintenance of American nation-state identity." Her reading of *Moby-Dick;* or, *The Whale* is provocative, arguing that the homoeroticism of the Ishmael/Queequeg relationship disrupts the white-supremacist narrative of white reproduction, "restoring [whiteness] to its erotic origins and divorcing it from its function as a surrogate for social, sexual, and racial values." David Roediger's *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (1991) brings together racial and class issues, tracing the construction of the white working class in the

U.S. and arguing that "working class formation and the systematic development of a sense of whiteness went hand in hand for the U.S. white working class." Finally, Dana D. Nelson's *The Word in Black and White: Reading "Race" in American Literature, 1638–1867* (1993) and *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (1998) are also central to these discussions. In *The Word in Black and White,* Nelson argues that the Anglo-colonial focus on "race" sprang from the Copernican revolution, colonial exploration, and the growth of a capitalist economy. In *National Manhood,* Nelson explores the origins of the American political discourse of white masculinity, a discourse best seen in depictions of white male fraternity and the American President. Nelson considers the ways that American discourse linked white masculinity to civic identity, thereby training and curtailing truly democratic ideas and practices.

**Postnational/Postcolonial**

A controversial area of increasing interest to many Americanists is the realm of the postnational or transnational; there has been an increasing tendency in the last ten years to question the nationalist assumptions of American studies, to read culture as transnational, to focus on the construction and reification of concepts of nationhood, and to interrogate national definitions. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983, 1991) is a seminal text in this young study of nationhood and postnationalism. Anderson scrutinizes the historical and cultural roots of nationalism, demonstrating that the mythic conception of "nation" is an eighteenth-century invention, an invention founded on discourse. He explores the constructedness of the "nation," demonstrating that the "nation" is imagined as a community bonded in fraternal or familial ties. Neil Larsen's *Determinations: Essays on Theory, Narrative and Nation in the Americas* (2001), applies up-to-date postcolonial theory to this issue of nationhood, reassessing Anderson's assertion that nation and narration are intertwined, and offering a radically historicized explanation of the rise of colonialism and nationhood. *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993), edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, and *National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives* (1994), edited alone by Pease, served to open the subject of the role of the United States in the colonial period as well as in relation to postcolonialism. In the second volume, Pease attempts to "facilitate the production of an alternative to the national narrative confirmative of the 'melting pot,'" by gathering

together essays that examine the construction of a "grand narrative of U.S. nationalism from its inception in antebellum slave narratives to its dissolution in the aftermath of the Cold War." In her *The Social Construction of American Realism* (1998), Kaplan explored some of the themes of American imperialism that are taken up by her and others in the collections. Hortense J. Spillers, in her edited collection *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text* (1991), offers a radical post-nationalist rethinking of the question of what constitutes "America," beginning a move toward studying literature of the "Americas" rather than isolating U.S. literature in its own disciplinary realm. One of the key figures in postnationalist American Studies is John Carlos Rowe. Rowe's edited collection, *Post-Nationalist American Studies* (2000), offers a radical revision of American literary history, one that is founded on a critique of cultural nationalism and American myths of exceptionalism. His *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (2000), studies the literary responses to U.S. imperialism, examining both the works of those writers who have attacked or been complicit in U.S. imperialism. A number of other useful works exploring these issues of postnationalism, globalization, and the postcolonial include Thomas Peyser's *Utopia and Cosmopolis: Globalization in the Era of American Literary Realism* (1998) and Wai-chee Dimock's *Empire for Liberty: Melville and the Poetics of Individualism* (1989), which attempts to connect Melville's poetics to the imperialism and nationalism of the antebellum United States.

### The Practice of the "No More Separate Spheres" Approach: Race, Class, and Gender

It could be argued that much of the most popular and influential scholarship currently being performed involves the practice of the "No More Separate Spheres" approach to literary and cultural scholarship, an approach that attempts to interrogate the interplay between race, class, national, and gender issues, an approach that attempts to transgress the disciplinary boundaries by interweaving various critical approaches, including cultural studies, New Historicism, subaltern and postcolonial studies, race theory, Marxist criticism, queer theory, and feminist theory. Given the wealth of valuable scholarship attempting to transgress the boundaries formerly thought to separate investigations into race, gender and sexuality, nationhood, and class, it is impossible to discuss more than a fraction of this work. For the purposes of brevity, we have, therefore, organized this summary around a few important debates or issues that

have galvanized "No More Separate Spheres" scholarship. One such focus is upon these contested issues: male homosexual or homosocial desire across color-lines in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; blackface and the carnivalesque; depictions of the racialized body; and the intersections of Queer Theory and Whiteness Studies. The works of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler provide a good starting point. Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) extends her concept of the homosocial introduced in *Between Men* (1985) into the American realm, with queer readings of such works as "Billy Budd" and "The Beast in the Jungle." Sedgwick argues that "homosexual" and "heterosexual" are constructs central to American and Western identities and that "an understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition." Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993), lies at the crossroads of psychological theory, queer theory, and racial investigations. Butler attempts to connect the heterosexualizing taboo on homosexual desire to similar xenophobic taboos on miscegenative desire, arguing that the desire for the same-sex Other and the desire for the racialized Other are related types of transgressive rebellion against societal, sexual normative codes. These normative codes are internalized as part of the symbolic domain and guarded by the superego. For Butler, the superego controls not only gendered desire, but also racial codes of desire. Since the subject's super-ego acts as society's internalized sex-police, as that "psychic agency by which social regulation" of norms "proceeds," the super-ego judges male desire for the masculine Other as a "sin," and thereby forces a repression, transfiguration, or displacement of that Desire into eroticized violence.

While Butler offers us a theoretical starting point for the project of analyzing the mixed space of male homosocial desires and fears beyond the color line, Marcus Wood's *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865* (2000) provides scholars with a sourcebook of visual depictions of slaves and slavery in British and American texts. Through them, Wood explores the trauma of slavery, the depiction of the slave as a feared, desired, and pitied figure, and the power, problematics, and limits of visual imagery to express the trauma and horror of slavery. Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1993) focuses on gender and queerness in her discussion of minstrelsy and on the connections between cross-dressing

and such racial transgressions as blackface, especially noting the frequency of female impersonation in minstrel troops. Garber's discussion links fears of homosexuality to fears of miscegenation, and she argues that "the possibility of crossing racial boundaries stirs fears of the possibility of crossing the boundaries of gender, and vice versa." Also important for considering these themes is Christopher Looby's " 'Innocent Homosexuality': The Fiedler Thesis in Retrospect," which appears in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Case Study in Critical Controversy* (1995) edited by Gerald Graff and James Phelan. Looby maintains that Fiedler's argument does not go nearly far enough and is mired in homophobic assumptions. He points out Fiedler's subtle stigmatization of homosexuality and naturalization of heterosexuality, taking exception to Fiedler's concept of "innocent" homosexuality, arguing that it both implies a "guilty" homosexuality and reveals Fiedler's troubling elision of homoerotic desire and infantile sexuality. While Looby adopts and extends Fiedler's investigation, he does so in a fundamental way: what for Fiedler is just a trope of interracial homosexual love becomes for Looby a new, historicist exploration of the actualities of nineteenth-century interracial homosexuality. In "Fiedler and Sons," in *Race and the Subject of Masculinities* (1997) edited by Harry Stecopoulos and Michael Uebel, Robyn Wiegman provides a reading of not only Fiedler, but of Robert K. Martin as well, arguing that Martin ignores the importance of the interracial aspect of the Ishmael/Queequeg bonding, and that Fiedler, in his replacing of the "homosexual" with the "homoerotic," acts to repress and disembody the sexuality inherent in the quintessential American myth of "love of a white man and a colored." Wiegman's critique of both Fiedler and Martin—her critique of their either/or reading of this literature as about race or gender—provides us with a valuable lesson in the possibility for a criticism that takes into account the important inter-relatedness of queer theory and race theory in a reading of nineteenth-century American literature.

In addition to the wealth of work dealing with male homosexual or homosocial interracial relationships/issues, a number of important feminist scholars have offered works focusing on black females in relation to race, class, and gender issues. One of the early influential works dealing with black women in a "No More Separate Spheres" manner was Hortense Spillers's "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," originally published in *Diacritics* (1987). Spillers explores the African female subject under the horrifying pressures of slavery, as well

as the impact of slavery on the family structure. Her approach makes use of psychological theory and focuses on the language of slavery and the impact of oppression on the black female body. Robyn Wiegman's *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (1995) also offers an important theoretical interrogation of black female subjectivity, and of the troubling theoretical elision of blackness and femaleness, from a black feminist perspective.

A useful collection of essays that furthers Spillers's and Wiegman's project of focusing on black female subjects using an approach combining feminist, psychoanalytic, racial, and new historicist methods is *Female Subjects in Black and White: Race, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (1997), edited by Elizabeth Abel, Barbara Christian, and Helene Moglen. The collection includes a wide variety of useful essays including Ann DuCille's "The Occult of True Black Womanhood: Critical Demeanor and Black Feminist Studies," Margaret Homans's " 'Racial Composition': Metaphor and the Body in the Writing of Race," Judith Butler's "Passing, Queering: Nella Larsen's Psychoanalytic Challenge," and Hortense J. Spillers's " 'All the Things You Could Be By Now, If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother': Psychoanalysis and Race." Given the renewed interest in religious and spiritual issues in American literary studies, the collection includes essays that explore the intersection of black female subjectivity and black spirituality, including Akasha (Gloria) Hull's "Channeling the Ancestral Muse: Lucille Clifton and Dolores Kendrick" and Carolyn Martin Shaw's "The Poetics of Identity: Questioning Spiritualism in African American Contexts." Katherine Clay Bassard's *Spiritual Interrogations: Culture, Gender, and Community in Early African-American Women's Writing* (1999) likewise focuses on female blackness and spirituality.

Another author investigating the black female subject is Stephanie A. Smith, who explores the construction and evolution of the ideology of maternity in American culture in her *Conceived by Liberty: Maternal Figures and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (1994). Smith traces the image and icon of the mother across a variety of genres and through works by a wide range of nineteenth-century black and white, male and female authors, including Lydia Maria Child, Henry James, Herman Melville, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Harriet Jacobs, and Frederick Douglass; her approach thus allows Smith to argue that the figure of the mother was not only a mythic symbol used for American nation building but was also a site of intense cultural and philosophical

contestation. Carole Boyce Davies, in her *Black Women Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (1994), examines black women's writing in the U.S. from a feminist and postcolonial perspective, arguing that migration narratives, with their tropes of home, homelessness, exile, and displacement, are central to black American women's diasporic writings. Davies further asserts that "home is a contradictory, contested space, a locus for misrecognition and alienation" in the literature of African American and Afro-Caribbean female writers in the U.S. Also important is the work of Hazel V. Carby, whose *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (1987) and *Race Men* (1998) bring together the "masculine" and "feminine" realms of investigation by questioning "the nature of the cultural representation of various black masculinities at different historical moments and in different media," interrogating the myths, themes, and "definitions of black masculinity at work in American culture."

**Canon Debate**

One of the most heated debates of the 1980s in American studies was over the literary canon, with contestants from inside and outside the academy arguing over the purpose and future of institutionally approved lists of texts that would be taught and anthologized in the future. While the debates continue, important changes in the American literary canon have been institutionalized. A current trend that extends the canon-inclusion of the 1980s and 1990s in a very interesting manner and that shows promise involves looking at literature written in the United States in a myriad of foreign languages. The leading spokesperson for expanding the definition of American literature to include the enormous body of writing composed in the United States in languages other than English has been Werner Sollors. His edited volumes, *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature* (1998) and, with Marc Shell, *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations* (2000) have created much interest in an alternative non-English American canon.

The canon reconstruction of the 1980s and early 1990s focused almost entirely on including formerly excluded ethnic American and female writers; for example, A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff and Jerry W. Ward, Jr.'s edited collection, *Redefining American Literary History* (1990), performs the work of adding African American, Hispanic, Native American, and Chinese American literatures to the canon. While this sort of canon-expansion work focused on race and gender

continues, the project of canon reformation also focuses on largely ignored genres, such as the gothic, autobiography, sentimental literature, journal-writing, travel narratives, romance, children's literature, and song. For example, Teresa A. Goddu, in *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (1997), rehistoricizes gothic American literature, tracing its development, including the development of the female gothic, the southern gothic, and most centrally the African American gothic. Cecilia Tichi, in *High Lonesome: The American Culture of Country Music* (1994) and *Electronic Hearth: Creating an American Television Culture* (1991), offers useful readings of popular music and television programming. Nina Baym, an important figure in the rediscovery and canon-inclusion of texts by female American authors, explores works of history written by women in *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790–1860* (1995), thereby challenging the belief that female writers focused on the domestic and private, leaving the public and the historical to male writers. Shirley Samuels and Karen Sanchez-Eppler focus on an expanded canon, including pamphlets, political cartoons, sermons, and sentimental anti-slavery literature, in order to explore the intersecting issues of identity, the politics of the black or female body, and the production of a national self; Samuels does so in *Romances of the Republic: Women, the Family, and Violence in the Literature of the Early American Nation* (1996) and Sanchez-Eppler does so in *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (1993). Any number of other traditional issues of American literary studies are related to the canon issue, including the issues of literary history, of aesthetics and aesthetic valuation, and of influence.

**Revision of Older Issues: Aesthetics and Influence**

Two areas central to literary scholarship throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s were literary influence and aesthetics or poetics. While these areas were largely marginalized in the 1980s, they have recently returned, but for the most part transformed by the theoretical developments of the last twenty years. With the realization that new approaches to American literature demand rethinking of these traditional areas of study in light of difference, multivocality, and post-structuralism, current scholars are proceeding skeptically upon principles that are tentative, open, and inclusive. Resisting notions of universality or transcendence, critics are now examining aesthetics and literary influences in relation to cultural differences and to the myriad of multicultural and multivocal influences that inform all texts. Moving well beyond the

Bloomian univocal idea of influence, current critics are embracing the theories of Mikhail M. Bakhtin and Jacques Derrida in order to examine the intersections of ideology and identity, including such ideological investigations as current ecocriticism. With new attention to the contexts of audiences and the literary marketplace, many have returned to the study of the rhetorical and oratorical components of verbal expression while others are examining the relation of art to religion and spirituality.

While most discussions of aesthetics in the last few years have complicated the traditional discussion by placing it within the context of culture, politics, the marketplace, or theology, there has also been a return to a more traditional sort of aesthetic investigation. Even here though, there is often the application of new perspectives to the old investigations. For example, while Elaine Scarry's *Dreaming By the Book* (1999) tends toward the traditional in certain ways, it is new in its use of discoveries from the realms of psychology and neuroscience. Several other works apply new perspectives to traditional aesthetic investigations: Marjorie Perloff's *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* (1996) applies Wittgenstein's language philosophy to an analysis of the radical aesthetic strangeness of poetic language; Philip Fisher's *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences* (1998) explores the aesthetics of wonder experienced in thoughtful encounters with artistic, mathematic, and scientific mysteries or novelties; and Rob Wilson's *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre* (1991) traces the aesthetics of the sublime in American literature from the Puritans to the postmoderns. There have also been a number of new defenses of the aesthetic. For example, Elaine Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999) and Geoffrey Harman's *Scars of the Spirit: The Struggle Against Inauthenticity* (2002) argue for the morality and authenticity of aesthetic pursuits. Hartman defends the artistic and aesthetic as moral necessities for a post-Holocaust, inauthentic world because the contemplation produced by aesthetic encounters resists the troubling fantasies and unrealities of ideology and data.

Other explorations of aesthetics have challenged the assumptions of traditional aesthetics, attempting to fashion a multicultural, postmodern, interdisciplinary aesthetics. *Aesthetics in a Multicultural Age* (2002), a collection of essays on a variety of multidisciplinary and multicultural aesthetic topics edited by Louis Freitas Caton, Jeffrey Rhyne, and Emory Elliott, explores the ways that the rapidly increasing ethnic diversity in the United States has impacted cultural production and cre-

ated a need for a serious reassessment of the nature and role of aesthetic theories and practices within a culturally diverse society. The various essays explore some of the issues of the so-called 'culture wars,' including the central problematics of attempting aesthetics in a multicultural society. It asks how aesthetic criteria may avoid the very real danger of becoming a tool of oppression working to exclude or marginalize. Contributors, including Satya P. Mohanty, Winfried Fluck, John Carlos Rowe, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Donald E. Pease, Johnella Butler, and Heinz Ickstadt, explored possibilities for multicultural aesthetic valuation and the need for "new terminologies, categories and processes of assessment." Michael P. Clark's edited collection, *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today* (2000), also pursues the search for a postmodern, multicultural aesthetics.

Another revisionist aesthetic issue involves the value of so-called "female" styles or genres, such as the sentimental. In Jane Tompkins' *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790–1860* (1985), she focused on the question "'But Is It Any Good?': The Institutionalization of Literary Value." In that essay, she argued that formalist criticism ignores the rhetorical, political, and ideological purposes of much American literature, and thereby acts to exclude writings by women from the canon. Cathy N. Davidson's *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (1986) analyzes the politics and aesthetics of the sentimental novel, in addition to offering a new-historicist, revisionist literary history that situates American literature within the contexts of marketplace, mass culture, and political debate. Davidson offers an implied rethinking of the canon and a rejection of what she sees as a masculinist aesthetics that leads to a masculinist canon. Julia A. Stern, in *The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel* (1997), re-imagines the aesthetics of early American sentimental, melodramatic, and gothic fiction, arguing that these works offer important feminized counternarratives to read against the masculinist narratives of nation-building. Another work dealing with these issues of gender, aesthetics, and the canon is Joyce W. Warren's edited collection, *The (Other) American Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers* (1993).

Some of the most interesting scholarship in the area of the "new" intellectual or literary history involves revisionary investigations into religion and spirituality, focusing on topics from the Puritans to African American religious concepts and practices. Some representative examples in this field include Jenny Franchot's *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (1994), Andrew Delbanco's *The*

*Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil* (1995), Susan L. Mizruchi's *The Science of Sacrifice: American Literature and Modern Social Theory* (1998) and her edited collection *Religion and Cultural Studies* (2001), Theophus H. Smith's *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America* (1994), Alfred Kazin's *God and the American Writer* (1997), Linda Munk's *The Devil's Mousetrap: Redemption and Colonial American Literature* (1997), and David Brion Davis' *In the Image of God: Religion, Moral Values, and Our Heritage of Slavery* (2001). Also popular are works investigating the relations between aesthetics and the forces of the marketplace, including cultural histories of the book, literacy, and the market realities affecting literary themes and stylistics. Examples include Hershel Parker's *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons: Literary Authority in American Fiction* (1984), Michael T. Gilmore's *American Romanticism and the Marketplace* (1985), R. Jackson Wilson's *Figures of Speech: American Writers and the Literary Marketplace, from Benjamin Franklin to Emily Dickinson* (1989), Cathy N. Davidson's *The Revolution of the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (1986) and her edited collection *Reading in America: Literature and Social History* (1989), Susan Coultrap-McQuin's *Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century* (1990), Richard H. Brodhead's *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (1993), and *Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America* (1996), edited by Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles.

**Influence (Radically Decentered)**

While Harold Bloom's theory of influence was useful in the 1970s, it was soundly attacked by feminists, multiculturalists, and others throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, scholarship dealing with the issue of influence largely disappeared and has only recently returned in a radically rethought form. While the American literary scholars who investigate the issues of influence make use of Bloom's theory, they reject Bloom in two ways. First, they largely reject Bloom's "intrinsic" theory of influence that focuses on author–to-author and work-to-work influences while ignoring "extrinsic" influences such as culture (both "high" and "low"), history, and ideology. Second, they reject the linear univocality of Bloom's theory of influence, in favor of a New Historicist theory of influence that is multivocal, heterogeneous, or polyphonic. Such new studies examine influences outside of traditional ideas of Euro-American high culture and focus on the overlapping religious, philosophical, literary, cultural, historical, and ideological influences. Paul

Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), provides one possible starting point for such studies of a hybridized culture and literary influence; Edouard Glissant's *Faulkner, Mississippi* (1999) offers another potential starting point, one that places Faulkner into relation to a set of cultural influences previously not considered. David S. Reynolds, in *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (1988), situates the canonical and ignored works of the "American Renaissance" in the context of the popular culture of the time, arguing that "American literature was generated by a highly complex environment in which competing language and value systems, openly at war on the level of popular culture, provided rich material" for the writers of the period. An interesting example of the wealth of work exploring the influence of popular or mass culture on the aesthetic of a "high" culture writer is Bill Brown's *The Material Unconscious: American Amusement, Stephen Crane, and the Economics of Play* (1996); Brown attempts to trace the influences of such mass cultural forms as amusement parks, football games, freak shows, minstrel shows, and movies on Stephen Crane's modernist aesthetic.

**Impact of Criticism and Theory on Writers and Readers**

With so many changes taking place over the last twenty years in the nature of the texts now being taught in the colleges, in the way these texts are interpreted, and in the reasons that certain writers are now acclaimed, it is only fair to ask what effect, if any, has all of this academic debate and innovation had upon practicing creative writers and upon their readers. While many pundits have made good copy by displaying and mocking some of the seeming absurdities of the culture wars and their fallout, it is actually quite clear that a great many of the ideas generated by scholars and critics have influenced how many writers write and how many readers interpret and judge what they read. We need only remember that during the same last twenty years, both writers and readers who are now prominent authors and their public went to colleges where all of these new ideas were being taught by enthusiastic, usually younger, faculty.

Perhaps the most obvious change is in the nature of what authors are being read. The opening of the American literary canon really began in the 1960s when many teachers were beginning to teach Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, and Frederick Douglass whose works were available in paperback, and they were also making available copies of works by nineteenth-century women like Kate Chopin and

Charlotte Perkins Gilman and African American authors whose works were long out of print and had never been taught. As students of the late 1960s and early 1970s began to read these women and African Americans like Charles Chesnutt and Pauline Hopkins, they realized that there was a whole literary history that had been denied them and thus called for more texts and courses to recover that lost history.

This emerging market was not lost on writers and publishers who not only began to report lost texts, but also began to encourage living writers like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, among many, to bring their works to a large audience. The women's movement celebrated such writers as Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, Denise Levertov, and Joyce Carol Oates. By the beginning of the 1980s, few college or high school literature teachers wanted to be accused of teaching a reading list that included predominantly DWM (dead white male) authors. Most students were delighted to learn about slavery from Douglass and other slave autobiographies and to learn about the twentieth-century experiences of women and minoritized people from the works of living women and writers of color. Informal neighborhood reading groups consisting mainly of women readers became quite common in the 1970s and 1980s and these white middle class women read the fiction of writers like Oates and Morrison to learn about parts of their society to which they did not have immediate access. One only has to go into a large book store in any city to find large sections devoted to works by Asian American, Latino/a, African American and Native American authors, and by the 1990s in many cities, there also appeared sections on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered writers.

While many women writers and writers of color were inspired to become writers and to produce more work because of the great demand for the stories of contemporary American life that they could tell, there also continued a healthy postmodern movement which in the early 1970s consisted mainly of white male writers like John Barth and Thomas Pynchon. The challenging style and narrative structure of their experimental fictions had great appeal for a small, sophisticated readership, but their works were also taught in the universities, and by the mid-1980s, a substantial readership had developed for the self-reflective, deconstructionist fictions. Unfortunately, this readership often expressed disdain for many women and minority authors whose works dominated the best-seller lists. Postmodern writing and works by women and writers of color were seen as two separate kinds of writing, with a few excep-

tions such as Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*. But when Toni Morrison's *Beloved* appeared in 1987 with its complex narrative structure and challenging rich, poetic prose, so different from the style and structure of her previous works such as *Song of Solomon,* it was evident that the partition between postmodern fiction and works by women and titanic minority writers was gone, if it had ever really existed.

For those who are skeptical that the theories and categories generated by critics and schools of the last twenty years had a profound effect on American society and culture, they need only look at movies and television narrative. With the appearance of the television shows *Miami Vice* and *Hill Street Blues* in the early 1980s, and *Twin Peaks* and *The Simpsons* in the early 1990s, postmodernism entered the living rooms of America, and while it was already in the neighborhood movie theaters in the early 1970s with the movies *A Clockwork Orange* and *Last Tango in Paris,* movies like *Pulp Fiction* and *Fargo* exemplified many of the self-reflective deconstructive ideas that were swirling through the college classrooms in the early 1990s.

**Conclusion**

As we ponder the question of "where to from here?" for the study of American literature, it is worth noting that some scholars have recently begun to suggest some possible directions. In his *Beyond Solidarity: Pragmatism and Difference in a Globalized World* (2001), Giles Gunn proposes that there remains a conflict in our research between the desire to understand and accommodate cultural differences and the impulse in art and criticism to express the "universally human." The pressures from literary theory and from liberal ideologies has opposed the yearning for universals, foundations, and the universal or essentially human. Gunn asks: "Despite widespread skepticism about the existence of universal values and truths and widespread acceptance of the fact that difference has now been established as one of the basic principles of personal as well as social ethics, is it nonetheless still plausible to think in a nontotalizing way about the possible basis of a morality that could be widely shared?" While Gunn is optimistic that such pragmatic compromises and common ground can be reached, he remains cautious as well.

In his *Literary Culture in a World Transformed: A Future for the Humanities* (2001), William Paulson expresses fear that the way literary culture has been defined in the last few decades has served to isolate it from the social and political realities of a changing world. Concerned that literary scholars have separated themselves too far from science,

commerce, and the marketplace and are focused too narrowly on particulars, he argues for the need for literary studies to embrace the technological future as well as the literary past, and to train a generation of critics who can translate the meanings and mysteries of literature to a society that is more concerned with the material world and technology than with the life of the mind and imagination. As this essay has tried to demonstrate, current criticism has already begun to respond to the concerns of both Gunn and Paulson with the emphasis upon the study of literatures of diversity, with the return to thematic and aesthetic criticism, and with efforts to preserve traditional approaches while being informed by contemporary theoretical models and open to artistic experimentation and theoretical innovation.

Certainly, as the sheer number of important studies we have cited and listed in the bibliography makes evident, there is no sign that an interest in producing literary scholarship and criticism is waning.

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